



January 4, 2006

Happy New Year Community Friends!

### **Car Related Crimes - Again**

Some of you have got to be tired of this subject. However, the fact remains that we still have a very high degree of car related crimes in our area. We face three main car related crimes:

- Auto theft - someone steals your car
- Auto accessory theft – someone steals something *that belongs* to the car (stereo, wheels/rims)
- Car Prowl – someone steals something *from* the car (briefcase, cell phone, etc.)

**Most car related crimes are preventable!**  
***Our own behavior contributes to the crime.***  
Here are some examples.

Example #1: I pop into a convenience store to get a cup of coffee. I shut off the engine, get out of my car and lock the doors. The car that I pulled in next to has keys in the ignition and the engine running while the vehicle owner is getting their cup of coffee. Auto theft is one of the most frequent crimes in the Seattle metro area, so why make it easy for someone by leaving the keys in the car and the engine running? By the way, leaving an unattended vehicle running is a crime.

Example #2: Nice neighborhood with nice houses with nice garages and nice cars parked on the street instead of in the nice garage. Why? There's no room in the garage for the car because it's full of stuff. We make room in the garage for a \$300 lawn mower, but leave our \$25,000 car parked on the street. Make room in the garage for both. It's a new year – make the resolution to clean out the garage to make room for your vehicle.

Example #3: I receive a lot of emails from people who have been the victim of a car prowler. I feel frustrated because people continue to leave items of value visible in their vehicles.

We hear the rationales "I was only away from the car for a few minutes;" "I spend most of my time in my car which is why most of my stuff is in there;" "I parked right out

in front of my house;" "How could this happen, I live in a safe neighborhood;" and so on. Criminals *do not care* about your rationale or where you live: they only care about the stuff you left in your car.

If I'm a criminal and you have a purse, cell phone, briefcase, laptop, etc., laying there for me to take, I'm gonna take 'em. If I don't see anything of value visible in the car, I'm going to the next car. I'm lazy - that's why I'm a criminal. I'm not going to waste my time and risk getting caught in the off chance that there might be something in the car. I'm going to spend my time and energy on the sure thing.

### **A Few Vehicle Crime Prevention Measures**

- When you exit or enter your parked vehicle, stop and take a look around the area. Park in well-lit areas.
- Do not leave anything of value visible in your car. When you place purchased items in your car, place them in the trunk out of sight. Do this when you get to your car, rather than waiting until you park at your next stop.
- Never leave your car idling
- Always remove the keys, roll up the windows and lock the car.
- If you have a garage or carport, park your vehicle there rather than on the street
- If you park on the street, choose a well-lit, open space even if it means adding additional street/yard lighting & trimming back trees/bushes that block your view of your vehicle.
- Do not leave a spare or valet key in the glove box or anywhere else in the car, as it is likely to be used to steal the car.

Take Care and Stay Safe!

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